
THE
COUNTRY SPECTATOR.

NUMBER XX.

TUESDAY, 19 February, 1793.

——— *Impranſi mecum diſquire. Cur hoc ?*
Dicam ſi potero. Male verum examinat omnis
Corruptus judex. HOR.

Read this !— but read it ere you've din'd :
For who with guts well cramm'd and lin'd,
Feels for a wretched ſtarveling ſinner,
That has not had one ſcrap of dinner ?

TO THE COUNTRY SPECTATOR.

Dear Sir,

AS I underſtand it will yet be a full hour before dinner is ready, I have retired to my own apartment with an intention of paſſing away the time as well as I can. Having taken up a pack of cards I had begun the game of *Patience*, to which I have often had recourſe on theſe occaſions ; but ſeeing one of your N^o. accidentally lying on the table, a thought has juſt come into my head that I cannot amuſe myſelf better than by communicating privately to you the matter of certain ſerious complaints and remonſtrances, which I dare not utter aloud any longer below ſtairs ; to avoid the tempta-

tion to which was, I believe, partly the reason of my getting out of the way. Indeed I have now little cause to hope they would produce any effect from my mouth : though if my wits were at this time nearly as sharp as my appetite, or my humour as lively as it is cross, I should have no doubt of gaining over the bulk of your readers, and perhaps might obtain *incog.* as an Author, even from my own family, that respect and attention to my admonitions, which I find it is idle to expect, as a Husband, Parent, or Master.

You must know, Sir, that about three months ago, my wife's Cousin, and her husband who is a respectable Tailor and Haberdasher in *London*, came down into the *Country* to pay us a visit. The Mail-coach arrives at our town about seven o'clock in the evening : and as the time allowed for refreshment on the road, to the passengers in these newly invented machines for the killing of horses and carrying of letters is so very short, and the treatment they receive at Inns in general not quite suitable to the rank, which the arms on their carriage might seem to bespeak, I naturally concluded our travellers would have no objection to an early supper, which accordingly made its appearance soon after their coming in. Being very much fatigued with their journey, about eleven o'clock they requested our permission to retire to rest. The late hour of their rising the ensuing morning, we attributed to the

same cause, and therefore indulged them, without comment, with a second breakfast, three hours after we had finished our own. This necessarily threw us a little wrong in our domestic œconomy. However, as dinner was deferred a considerable time, we hoped the morning ramble they had taken, to call on several acquaintance, would have got them a sufficient appetite by half past two. But how shall I describe their surprize on being introduced into the room where the cloth was spread, and our beef smoking on the board? They seemed scarcely to believe their own eyes; and, I observed, frequently turned their heads to the window, as if to be satisfied whether it was actually broad daylight or not. It seems, they had luckily mistaken the name of the meal they had had the preceding evening, and therefore it had passed off without attracting their admiration; tho' I now remember they said something about "going to bed so soon after *dinner*," which I did not then particularly notice.

WELL! to be sure, they did manage to get something down, and I should have wondered if they had not; for it was of the best our market could afford, and, I warrant, as good as any in *Clare* or *Leadenhall*; though on the other hand, I could not help wondering how Mrs. *Townley* contrived to eat any thing at all, her tongue ran on so fast, all the while, in praise of fashionable people, fashionable customs, and fashionable hours. In vain I apolo-

gized by pleading the inconvenience that would attend our adopting, in the *Country*, the manners of the Metropolis, and that the narrowness of our income must be an effectual bar to our pursuing them in their full extent. We were assured by our *London* Cousin that the rich and great neither could nor ought to enjoy exclusively the privileges of fashion, but that it is always in the power of others to imitate, and, in many instances, even to outdo them. I observed, in return, that in those points of fashion, as dress, visiting, &c. in which it was possible for the fashionable world to be rivalled by those who were beneath them, the reciprocal desire to outdo each other generally led to a ridiculous excess; while in some other points of true politeness and good-breeding, in which they had evidently the advantage over their inferiors, they were wont to rest satisfied with very moderate attainments.

It is needless to inform you, of all the arguments she used in her reply to this observation, and all the strange things, true and untrue, which she related. Suffice it to say, that her elaborate and eloquent harangue carried so powerful conviction to the minds of my wife and eldest daughter, that as there appeared presently four to one against me, I was fairly compelled to give up the contest. "We certainly can do no less, my dear," said my wife, "than indulge our visitors, while they stay with us, by relinquishing in some measure our usual hours

“ of rising, eating and sleeping, in favour of their
“ more polite and established mode.” But the mis-
fortune is, that since their *departure* she cannot be
prevailed upon to return to our former “ heathenish
“ habits of living.” I have not yet, indeed, been able
to attain the *fashion* of sleeping beyond what nature
requires, and therefore continue to rise unfashion-
ably early in the morning. But then my wife be-
ing sole manager and master in the business of the
kitchen, as you will allow she ought to be, she here
completely counteracts all my wishes and plans of
reformation. I cannot think of breakfasting alone ;
and therefore must wait till she comes down stairs.
—Our time of dining too, depending entirely on
the Cook, she has me, in this instance, wholly in her
own power. She “ wonders how I can be so vulgar
“ as to be hungry before the time prescribed by the
“ *beau monde*,” and is still more surprised when I am
angry (which I assure you is sometimes the case) that
I may not have my victuals ready at my accustomed
hour. Now I am of opinion, Mr. *Spectator*, that every
thing which has a tendency to put the head of the
family out of temper ought to be avoided by a prudent
and obedient wife, who should be studious, above
all things, of domestic peace and tranquillity. But
I never yet heard of a hungry *Man*, any more than a
hungry *Lion*, who was quite so gentle and good-hu-
moured, as when the pressing calls of appetite were
seasonably allayed : and I herein differ from most
other writers, that I appeal to none but snarling and

hungry Critics to decide on the merits of my cause. Then, Sir, as to our poor children :—it would move your pity to hear them relate the floggings they have undergone for not coming to school of a morning at the proper hour; to see them packed off a second time without dinner, and their fretful impatience when they come home, till Mamma commands it to be brought in. I used formerly to have much pleasure in smoking my pipe in an afternoon with a few friends at the *King's-Head*; but when I go there now, I find them all decamped, and the business of the nation and of the parish settled without my vote or consent. As we are the first who have attempted to introduce *fashionable hours* into our country-town, we are frequently brought into very ludicrous embarrassments with our neighbours. They have more than once alarmed us terribly, towards the middle of the day, by breaking open the window-shutters, concluding we had been all dead; and I fear they are sometimes apt to suppose me a little deranged, on my wishing them a good *morning* when they are taking their *evening* walk. We have many times been surprized by their coming in to tea before the bottles were removed; and when we last visited our Cousin *Homespun*, who lives a short mile distant from us, we absolutely lost our dinner; as they were fully persuaded, from our late hour of coming, that some unforeseen accident had prevented our complying with their invitation.

IN short, it is impossible to describe the confusion, that has been introduced into our family, by attempting to adopt the fashionable division of the twenty-four hours; which, however it may suit the meridian of *London*, is clearly contrary to the course of Nature in our climate. Indeed I cannot help thinking but that, allowing for the difference of latitude and longitude between this place and the metropolis, the fashionable world have got woefully out in their calculations of times and seasons. Nor is this at all to be wondered at. I remember, when I was very young, hearing a deal about the alteration of the *style*: the Sun himself, it seems, notwithstanding his apparent love of order and regularity, had got eleven days wrong in his reckoning. But, when the error was once fairly discovered, the supreme power of the *British Legislature*, evidently greater than that of *Josbua*, soon set him right in his course. As therefore we cannot doubt the omnipotence of the present *Parliament* any more than that of any preceding one, so the reformation of the "*Calendar of Fashion*" appears to me an object no less worthy of its wisdom and most serious attention. The scheme which was adopted for the correction of the *Julian year* would equally apply to the *fashionable day*. A portion of it, for once, might be supposed to be omitted, and thus that which would have been dinner, will become supper, in the ordinary course. I would further propose that *Sunday* should always be considered as an intercalary day in the routine of

high life ; the frequent recurrence of which would serve, in some degree, to rectify the errors of the preceding week, and prevent those who properly availed themselves of its assistance, from running again hastily so far out of the bounds of nature and reason.

I AM sorry, Sir, that I cannot stay to communicate to you the whole of my plan ; but the bell at last rings for dinner, and you must excuse me.

*** Jan. 21st. 1793.

Your's in haste,

half past five. P. M.

Efurians.

P. S. On a re-perusal of my letter since I returned to my room, I find myself not half so well satisfied with it as I was before : my wife is indeed an excellent cook, and I fear I have been rather too severe against her.—Nay I verily believe I should altogether have suppressed this Paper and thrown it into the fire, had she not provokingly told me that it was my appetite that was improved by waiting till a decent hour, and not the flavour of her saucers.

P. S. 2d. Jan. 22d. 4 o'clock. P. M. I find I am quite right in all I have written, and am now determined to send off my letter immediately. Your's as before.

Efurians.

G. Smith of the Press A.

*** Answers to Correspondents will be given in the next.